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6 June

A
NARRATIVE
OF THE
INCIDENTS WHICH FORM THE MYSTERY,
IN THE FAMILY OF
GENERAL GUNNING.
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES;
AND
STRICTURES
ON THE
"Vindication" of Mrs, GUNNING.
COMPRISING
Copies of all the Letters, Affidavits, &c. &c.
THE WHOLE PLACED
IN A NEW POINT OF VIEW.

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IN A NEW POINT OF VIEW

Copies of all the latest

"Vindication" of

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STRICTURES

ON THE CELEBRATED

"Vindication" of Mrs. GUNNING.

NO circumstance has occurred in the variegated circle of Fashion, for a long series of years, that has excited the public attention, in so high a degree, as the recent dissensions which have prevailed in the family of General Gunning.—To see a young lady, in the bloom of youth and beauty, banished from the house of him whom Nature had designed for her protector—to see the parent become the accuser of his child—the husband, of his wife—was to witness a spectacle of so strange and singular an aspect, as could not fail to work, in either sex, on every passion of the mind. The malignant sneer of Revenge has been excited—the benevolent tear of Pity has been moved—and the rancorous smile has been raised on the distorted features of Envy. To gratify a curiosity, in all respects natural—in *many* laudable—we have investigated, as far as in us lay, the labyrinths of this mysterious transaction; and though, from the contradictory nature of those materials with which we have been supplied, we cannot boast of our ability to furnish a *complete* and *satisfactory* narrative; yet may we safely affirm, that our attempts at

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elucidation have been so far successful, as to afford our Readers a proper Standard of Belief, to enable them to discriminate, in a certain degree, between candour and fraud ; and, to distinguish the objects of rejection from those of admission.

General Gunning is brother to the Miss Gunnings, who, towards the middle of this century, were so justly remarked for the splendour of their beauty, and the singular felicity of their fortune.

Every one must recollect that, from an obscure situation in Ireland, they attained to an elevated sphere in this country—a sphere which they embellished by their charms, and which *one* of them honoured by the propriety of her conduct. One of these ladies married the Earl of Coventry; the other became wife to the late Duke of Hamilton, by whom she had the present Duke ; and, on his death, espoused the Duke of Argyle ; she is, consequently, mother to the present Marquis of Lorn.—To this latter connection is General Gunning indebted for the rank he now holds in the army, and the regiment he commands. About three-and-twenty years ago, the General married a Miss Minifie, either one of the authoresses of, or sister to the ladies of that name, who wrote *Barford-Abbey*, and some other productions in the novel line : by her he had the Miss Gunning, who has, unfortunately, become the topic of public conversation, and is, therefore, the heroine of these Memoirs.

That this young lady, who, with the personal accomplishments of her celebrated relations, possesses a mind endowed with much ornamental and substantial excellence, should attract the attention of numerous admirers, is by no means a matter of wonder ;—that men of the highest rank, too, should regard her with looks of affection, is natural, and, therefore, easy of belief. In the latter class, we are given to understand, were the Marquis of Blandford, son to the Duke of Marlborough, and the Marquis of Lorn, the lady's cousin ; the last, from the frequent visits of Miss Gunning, at the house of his father, may be supposed to have had every opportunity which a lover could

could desire for ingratiating himself into the good graces of his mistress; yet the former *appears* to have been more successful in his endeavours to obtain her approbation. The addresses of this nobleman were continued for a considerable time with the *supposed* sanction of all parties concerned—a letter or letters, *seem* to have passed between them, and every thing promised a speedy and happy termination to this delicate and important business. Some suggestions, however, from the Duke of Argyle, as to the Duke of Marlborough's knowledge of his son's addresses, being communicated to the father of the lady; the general—as he says—sent his groom (on the second of February last) to Blenheim, with a letter, imparting to the Duke the Marquis's *penchant* for his daughter, and requesting to know whether their union would be sanctioned with his Grace's approbation—assuring him, at the same time, that if he disapproved of the connection, the matter should proceed no farther. The groom returned with an answer (on the succeeding night) of favourable import; expressive of respect for the young lady's merit, and of his perfect acquiescence in the choice and proceedings of his son. But still the suspicions of the Duke of Argyle, lulled but for a very short time, were speedily renewed; impelled by these, he doubted the authenticity of the letter, and applied for information on the subject to Lord Charles Spencer, who, he rightly supposed, must be acquainted with the seal and hand-writing of his brother. From this nobleman he learnt, that it was an awkward imitation of the Duke's hand, but that the seal was either a copy of, or the actual seal, which the Duke had formerly worn to his watch, but which he had not then used for some years, having employed a seal of a smaller size, and a different form. Enraged at this intelligence, General Gunning questioned his wife and daughter on the subject; he told them that a forgery had been committed either *by* or *on* them, and insisted on being acquainted with the truth. The ladies protested their innocence in the strongest terms, and declared, that if *he* was the dupe of a fraud, *they* must be equally so. The groom who brought the letter

was next interrogated ; and General Gunning has asserted that, by dint of threats and solicitations, he confessed that a bribe had been given him to favour the deception ; and *his* affirmations, together with some circumstances which were reported to the General by a *Mr. Bowen*, induced him to tax his daughter with forgery, and to expel her from his house.

Such are the outlines of this extraordinary transaction, as given to the world, by the partizans of the husband. They afford not the smallest clue to the developement of the mystery ; on the contrary, they present to us a forgery from whence no possible benefit could be derived, and exhibit a stratagem without a motive. By wandering in the boundless field of *conjecture*, and investigating every *possible* occurrence, this *supposition* may indeed be collected—That the lady, enamoured of the Marquis of Lorn ; and finding his addresses unpursued with that decisive ardour that rushes forward with impetuosity to the desired goal, deemed it necessary to have recourse to this deception, in the hope that a sight of the forged letter, by raising up an imaginary rival, would act as a stimulus to his love, and facilitate the accomplishment of her wishes. But all suspicions of this sort are effectually done away, by the affidavit of Miss Gunning, which we shall, hereafter, have occasion to notice ; and by the “*Vindication*” of her mother, to the examination of which we shall now proceed.

Mrs Gunning, as we learn from her own account, had long been at variance with her husband : she tells us, indeed, that two and twenty, out of three and twenty years, that they had been married, had furnished her with ample subject for sorrow and repentance. High words had frequently passed between them ; and but a few days previous to this transaction, she had been ordered by him to withdraw from his house : but the violent effect which this conduct had on the delicate frame of her child, induced her on this, as on all other occasions, to suffer the tenderness of the mother to overcome the resentment of the wife ; and, in order to save the life of her daughter, which she believed to be in imminent danger, she condescended

scended to make concessions ; which she considered as too degrading, on a review of her own conduct in comparison with that of her husband.—That husband too, she declares, she had long suspected of entertaining wishes inimical to the felicity of his child. The intimation contained in this declaration, when applied to the subsequent occurrences, is obvious. From suspicions of this nature, which of course must have given rise to much altercation and mistrust, Mrs. Gunning was induced to make occasional memorandums of any occurrences of consequence, which happened in her family. It does not appear, however, that she kept any memorandum prior to “the *Second of February*,” when she remarked as follows :

“Between eleven and twelve this morning, General Gunning has sent off his groom with a letter to the — of —, [Duke of Marlborough] which letter he has written in his dressing-room, but has not shown the contents to any of his family.”—This letter, we are told, was sent by a groom, who is not regarded as a *family* servant ; he eats and sleeps in the house, but lives by day with his horses at the livery-stable ; sometimes attending his master in his rides, and sometimes *any lady* who happens to be under General Gunning’s *protection*. This sarcasm, by which we are given to understand, that her husband is a man of intrigue, is certainly misplaced ; it neither aids her argument, nor affords the smallest support to her cause. The case with regard to the groom is different ; to show his exclusive dependence on, and subserviency to the will of, his master, is essential to corroborate those circumstances which tend to invalidate his testimony. The second memorandum is as follows :

February 3.—Nine o’clock at night.

“General Gunning’s groom is just now returned from — ; [Blenheim] he brought back a letter for his master. I sent for it, examined the *direction* and the *seal*. Captain and Mrs. Bowen, my daughter and sister, were present. I told them *some tricks* had certainly been played with the *letter*, and pointed out to *their* observation, that

that the coronet was *reversed* in the sealing it ; and that, instead of St. James's Place, it was written, on the direction, St. *James* Place. I then gave it to the servant to lay it on his master's table ; for General Gunning *was not at home*.

“ The seal and superscription still floated on my ideas ; I sent for the letter a second time, re-examined it, and then returned it to his dressing-room by the same servant ; the whole time, both *first* and *last*, that this letter was detained *by us*, did not amount to five minutes ; nor did the servant, who brought it to, and carried it from, the drawing-room, quit the room till I sent it down by him to be laid on his master's table.”

The *answer* here alluded to, as brought by the groom to his master, is the letter which Miss Gunning has been accused—and by her FATHER too—of dictating and writing, for the purpose of imposition. Mrs. Gunning, foreseeing, probably, that her avowed conduct with regard to this letter, the moment of its arrival, without any *apparent* motive for suspecting the dangerous nature of its contents, would appear singular and extraordinary, has thought it necessary to assign her reasons for acting as she did.—“ Why—she says—I ordered this letter, and why I inspected the *seal* and the *directions* with the scrutinizing eyes of suspicion, would, were I to speak to *every* reason, and to *every* proof that I can produce, be of *themselves* sufficient to fill a volume, every page of which would be more mysterious and more wonderful than another. I shall therefore content myself with averring to your Grace, [her Vindication is addressed to the Duke of Argyle] that no letter, since last May, has come to me, either by the post, or by a stage-coach—for I have tried the conveyance of both—but what has been cut across *the seal*, with a hot knife, before I got them. This very day, being the twenty-second of February, I have received a parcel from Hampshire, in which was *inclosed* a letter ; it came by the coach, *and* the seal cut across as usual.”—Such are the reasons alledged ; but we confess ourselves at a loss to conceive

conceive in what respect they are applicable to the point in question. They show, indeed, what we before noticed, that a *mutual* distrust prevailed between them; but why the circumstance of her husband having opened *her* letters, should induce her to suspect any treachery in one addressed to *him*, we cannot imagine. There might be *other* grounds for suspicion; but these, candour compels us to declare, appear, to us at least, futile and invalid. Her certainty, too, of *tricks* having been *played* with the letter, seems to be founded on a basis of no greater solidity: the omission of an S in St. James's, and the reversal of the coronet, in the *seal*, might certainly have been the effect of precipitation; and, in strictness, we conceive was less likely to have occurred in a deliberate *forger*, than in the noble (*supposed*) author of the epistle.

Among other observations on Memorandum the second, Mrs. Gunning makes the following appeal to the Duke of Argyle:—"I shall begin with asking your Grace if, on your conscience, you think that, supposing my daughter, or I, or both together, had framed, forged, and sent this letter, which was, on the groom's return, to be delivered by him as coming from the — of — [Duke of Marlborough] that I should have *ordered* it to be brought up to me, and *before* company? that I should be the *first* to discover *there had* been a fraud committed? or that, in pointing it out to my daughter's observation—which I did—that] she should have coincided with me in opinion? for, if *she* had been guilty, and I innocent, or suppose us *both* culpable, wickedness and folly do not always go hand in hand. Surely, had we been the authors of the fraud, we were not necessitated to impeach ourselves, we need not have commanded back the letter, after having once dismissed it, and a second time have examined the *seal* and *directions* with all the scrutiny of a too well authorized suspicion. Should *we* have done this, my lord? Should we have put this *disputed* letter into the hands of Bowen and his wife, to help us in detecting the fraud, if it must have fallen on our *own* heads? I did give it to those
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that the coronet was *reversed* in the sealing it ; and that, instead of St. James's Place, it was written, on the direction, St. *James* Place. I then gave it to the servant to lay it on his master's table ; for General Gunning *was not at home*.

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—for

—for their opinion ;—was there any thing like guilt in all this ?”

This argument appears decisive ; for the only purpose for which the forgery could have been committed by the ladies, must have been effectually marred by such a mode of proceeding. To have its effect, the imposition must pass on the Duke, the Marquis, and the General ; but this, a premature discovery of the fraud must inevitably prevent.

The next observation of Mrs. Gunning is not equally happy :—Her daughter having been accused of bribing her father’s groom to favour the deception of the letter, she remarks, that without *money* there can be no *bribe* ; that her daughter has never been possessed of money sufficient for *such* undertakings ; she has ever had something for the aid of goodness, but nothing for the support or purposes of vice.—Yet she tells us, that her daughter had, at one time, five guineas and a twenty-pound bank-note in her purse—and surely a much smaller sum would have sufficed for the corruption of a menial domestic !

Though we are told by his wife that the General is by no means deficient in curiosity, yet it is remarkable, that, on the very night when he expected the return of his groom, at eight o’clock, with a letter on which the welfare and felicity of his family so essentially depended, he chose to sup from home, and stayed out till one o’clock, not even leaving orders where the letter might be brought to him. Mrs. Gunning, who lay next the street, was awakened by the knock at the door on her husband’s return ; she heard him get out of the carriage, which then drove off ; a minute afterwards the hall-door was opened with great caution, and immediately a coach drove into the place ; she heard the step let down, and it drove back again with great speed. At this time there was nobody up in the house but the General’s own man, whom he charged not to say he was gone out, should any enquiries be made. He drove to Argyle-House, where he left *the letter* with the Duke.—The servant waited his master’s return in the porter’s hall ; the door was opened without

without knocking, and the General went up to his chamber so softly as not to be heard by any body but his wife. The groom slept in a garret immediately over *her* room; and, after his master was in bed, she heard his man go up to the groom, and heard them converse together. She was *informed*, that the message he carried to the groom from his master was to *charge* him not to say any thing about his journey to Blenheim till he should have seen him, with orders that he should go in the morning to his bed-side by seven o'clock.

The next day, February the 4th, Mrs. Gunning, in her third Memorandum, says—"General Gunning was in my daughter's room this morning before she was up, and informed her he had *received* a charming letter from the D— of ——— [Duke of Marlborough] which he had left with the Duke of Argyle; and also told her he had been last night at Argyle-house for that purpose, and would take her with him there; that she might see, as soon as she was dressed: she has been at Argyle-house for that purpose, and this most charming letter has been shewn to her, and my heart partakes in her joy, though I have not seen the contents; but she has repeated them to me as nearly as she can remember them: I am as much transported with her happiness as if I had, and (as her mother) I ought to have been, consulted on every step that has been taken; but should General Gunning really mean to act now fairly by my heart's treasure, if he no longer works under ground to impede her felicity, I will forgive all his past reserves, although under the severity of their pressure I have been suffering the pains of torture for so many months.—If he is not conscious that *his* wishes are opposed to *my* wishes, on a point where both should be equally interested, why does he throw out so many dark hints, and never speak to me with confidence or kindness? Why not shew the D— of ———'s [Duke of Marlborough's] letter to me, if every thing is really coming to a crisis?—There is yet a darkness in his conduct that I do not comprehend. Another circumstance gives me suspicion;—he has been this day examining the

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servant

servant who brought the letter up stairs, very closely, whether we looked much at the seal, and at the direction, and how long we kept it the first and second time that we sent for it.—Surely he knows me too well, not to know that I should on no occasion condescend to open any letter that was not directed to myself—what then can he mean by being so inquisitive!—’Tis very odd—I do not like it—I have been so long in a scene of mysteries, of which he is the artificer, that I never expect to get out of them as long as I live!”

The intelligence conveyed in this memorandum is extremely mysterious, and—admitting it to be strictly correct—renders the General’s conduct wholly inexplicable. We are before informed, that after his return home the preceding night, he went out again, in a *secret* manner, charging his servant (should any enquiries be made) not to say that he was gone out. Hence we were led to believe that his visit to Argyle-house was influenced by some *private* motive, and that he did not wish it should be known; yet we now find that the first thing he did the next morning was to go into his daughter’s apartment, and inform her that he had been there, and shown a *charming* letter, which he had received from Blenheim, to the Duke.—The daughter, too, accompanies her father to Argyle-house to see the letter; and though she had before been convinced, with her mother, that tricks had been played with it, and had actually *discovered a fraud*, she yet is silent on the subject to her father, and conceals from him her fears and suspicions; nay, though certain the letter was an imposition (for if the discovery of a *fraud* in it amounted not to that certainty, we know not what it could import) she receives great joy from the perusal of it, and on her return communicates this joy to her mother, who appears for a time to have laboured under a similar infatuation.—The conduct of all the parties concerned is, in this instance, strange indeed!—One circumstance of importance, however, which depends not on the mere *ipse dixit* of the Lady, is the subsequent examination of the servant by the General, relative

lative to the *seal* and the *direction*.—To this point Mrs. Gunning's informer (probably her own maid) and the servant in question can speak; and their silence on the subject must certainly be deemed a confirmation of the fact.—This examination indisputably wears a very suspicious look; and but one *exculpatory* motive occurs to us that could possibly have given rise to it.—The General might have heard from *his own man* that the letter had been twice sent for by Mrs. Gunning, and that its seal and superscription had undergone a minute investigation; such previous intelligence would certainly superinduce and justify the enquiries he made.—This candour compels us to suggest, as being *possible*; how far it is *probable*, let our readers decide for themselves.

Before we proceed to the fourth Memorandum, it is necessary to premise, that Mr. and Mrs. Bowen, whose names have already appeared in this transaction, and are again to be brought forward in a very particular manner, are, as Mrs. Gunning insinuates, the humble dependants of her husband.—In short, to comprize her whole meaning in a few words—General Gunning *has a regiment*; and Mr. Bowen *wants a company*—more need not be said. These people were frequent visitors at St. James's-Place; and Mrs. Bowen's skill on the harpsichord was, independent of other considerations, a powerful inducement to Mrs. Gunning to engage her to be often with her daughter, who was learning to play on that instrument.

MEMORANDUM IV.

February the 5th.

“ This day has opened a scene of *premeditated* —, the *agents* of which are Bowen and his wife; and such a conversation has passed between that *woman* and myself, as I shall not notice here, being impressed on my memory, and never to be erased from thence.”—Yet, notwithstanding this declaration, she proceeds to notice a conversation, which, we apprehend, must be the same

she *here* alludes to.—It appears—we speak on the authority of Mrs. Gunning—that on Saturday, Feb. the 5th, Miss Gunning, her mother, and aunt, (Miss Minifie) called, on their return from the Park, about three in the afternoon, at Mrs. Bowen's house, and sent up a message to invite the husband and wife to dinner. The latter came down, and placed herself in the carriage, apologizing for her husband, who, she said, was gone into the country. The General dined at home; but illness prevented Mrs. Gunning from attending at table that day, as it had done for several days before; the Ladies, about seven, joined her in the drawing-room, where Mr. Bowen made his appearance soon after. He had not been there many minutes before a servant came to inform him that the General wished to speak to him; on his return, Mrs. Gunning expressed her alarm at the message, and her wish to be informed of the particulars of the conversation that had passed between him and her husband;—for, she observes, she had *then* fears of a very *serious* nature. After some hesitation, he said, it was to ask him for five guineas, it being too late to send to his banker's. The Lady having seen the General, two days before, take a number of bank-notes out of his pocket, declared her disbelief of this declaration; but the gentleman pledging his honour for its veracity, she became satisfied. General Gunning soon left home for the evening, and his daughter went to pass an hour with the Dutchess of Bedford; Mrs. Bowen was then sitting at the harpsichord; her husband and Miss Minifie were at picquet, and Mrs. Gunning at work: when the party was thus disposed of, Mrs. Bowen, rising hastily from her seat, beckoned to Miss Minifie, who, apologizing to Mr. Bowen, followed her out of the room. On the return of these Ladies in about a quarter of an hour, the countenance of one was highly expressive of confusion, while that of the other was pale and agitated.—It was evident something extraordinary had passed between them.—Mrs. Gunning was alarmed; but before she could recover herself sufficiently to ask for an explanation,

Mrs.

Mrs. Bowen advised her husband to go and pass an hour at the coffee-house; a request with which he immediately complied. As soon as he was gone, Miss Minifie told Mrs. Bowen that it was now highly proper she should repeat to Mrs. Gunning what she had been telling her. "For God's sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Gunning, "what is the matter?"—"Do not alarm yourself," replied her sister; "Mrs. Bowen will tell you *all*. Some devil has been forging a letter to *her*, in the name of our darling here," (meaning Miss Gunning). Mrs. Gunning, after the most earnest solicitations, prevailed on Mrs. Bowen to gratify her curiosity, which, with great *seeming* reluctance, and *seeming* tenderness, she proceeded to do in the following terms:

"Oh, my dearest Mrs. Gunning! *you have been deceived! you are cheated! you are abused!* and, I fear, when you know all, it will kill you; it will be the death of you. I owe you more than my mother; and I love you better than I loved her: how then can I kill you by telling you your daughter is a wretch!" This abrupt declaration, it must be confessed, was a very singular instance of *affection*! It had not, however, the effect it might naturally have been expected to have on the mind of the person to whom it was addressed. Fully convinced of the purity, honour, and rectitude of her daughter, with whose every action, and whose every thought, she was (in her own ideas at least,) perfectly acquainted, and who was even a stranger to the *common*—(maternal partiality may be admitted as a plea, in excuse of this *hyperbolical* expression)—a stranger even, we are told, to the *common* failings of her sex, Mrs. Gunning heard the accusation with composure, and begged Mrs. Bowen to proceed. Thus entreated, Mrs. Bowen, after various protestations of regard for Mrs. Gunning, and assurances that she and her husband had been nearly distracted on her account, by the knowledge they had acquired of the *wicked creature's* (Miss Gunning's) duplicity, continued as follows:—"My dearest Mrs. Gunning, how dreadfully have you been imposed upon! every body is combined to
deceive

deceive you ; and the mysteries that have so long made you miserable, are all created by Miss Gunning's artful conduct : indeed, indeed, my dear Mrs. Gunning, though you think she is to marry Lord Blandford, do not set your heart upon it ; she *never* will marry him."—"How do you know this ?" said Mrs. Gunning—"Because," replied the other, "Miss Gunning will marry Lord Lorn, and not Lord Blandford."—"From what authority do you declare it, Mrs. Bowen ?"—"Because," returned she, "about five days ago she wrote me a letter, in which she told me what I now tell you ; and in this letter there was enclosed one from the Duke of Marlborough to her father, which she desired I would get Mr. Bowen to copy for her : and she there desired me not to mention the report which, she said, I must certainly have heard, as it was known over the whole town, that she was to be married to Lord Lorn." Mrs. Gunning, still incredulous, expressed her conviction that the letters she mentioned were forgeries, calculated for the ruin of her daughter's reputation ; but Mrs. Bowen insisted on their authenticity, and promised that Mrs. Gunning should have ocular demonstration of the young lady's duplicity and wickedness. "To strengthen what I have told you," added Mrs. Bowen, "about the *two* letters Miss G. sent to me—one of which she desired me to get Mr. Bowen to copy—I will tell you what she has said to me this very day, and then you cannot doubt the truth of all I have been saying."—"Go on," said Mrs. Gunning, "and conceal nothing ; it is for my security that I should know all, that I may be able to defend myself against my enemies."—"What a wretch, what a compleat wretch," continued Mrs. Bowen, "is this vile daughter of your's ! to have been so long carrying on such a scene of deception as has almost destroyed you ; and so I have told her *this very day*."—"When and where, Mrs. Bowen, did you tell her so ?"—"First, at the piano-forte ; and, afterwards on the stairs, as we came up to you from the dining-room. I first said to her, For shame ! for shame ! Miss Gunning ; how can you impose so on your mother ; how can you appear to her to
carry

carry on the affair with Lord Blandford, and yet resolve to marry Lord Lorn?"—"What was her reply?" said Mrs. Gunning. "Why, that I knew she was determined to marry Lord Lorn, and nothing should turn her, but that she was afraid to tell her mamma."—"And what did you say to her again on the stairs, Mrs. Bowen?"—"I said, Miss Gunning, you are killing your dear good mother by inches, and if you do not tell her the abominable part you are acting, Mr. Bowen and I are come to a resolution, for the sake of your mother, to tell her of it ourselves; for, if we keep your secret, she will lose her life."—"This was very home indeed; could she say nothing in defence of herself?"—"O! no; nothing in the world but poh, poh, never mind that."—With regard to the conversation here said by Mrs. Bowen to have passed between her and Miss Gunning, Mrs. Gunning affirms, that she was sitting close by them the whole time they were at the pianoforte, and heard nothing of it, though not a word or a whisper could have escaped her ear. Miss Minifie, too, affirms, that she accompanied them from the dining-room to the drawing-room, and that not a syllable was then uttered on any subject whatever.

The dialogue between the two ladies continued.—To Mrs. Gunning's question, of what farther passed between Mrs. Bowen and her daughter on that day, Mrs. Bowen answered—"I forgot, my dear Mrs. Gunning, to tell you of it before; that when Miss Minifie went up to ask you how you did after dinner, and *before* she returned again to us, General Gunning, Miss Gunning, and myself, being left by ourselves, the General said *something* that *must* convince you that your daughter is acting the very part I have told you."—"Pray what is that something?"—"Why, as soon as Miss Minifie was gone out of the room, General Gunning began to say what a very handsome letter that was he had received from the Duke of Marlborough, notwithstanding it contained this reflection, that his Grace wished the General and his daughter had known their own minds *sooner*, for as his son Lord Blandford was indisposed, and had a very strong affection for Miss Gunning, he was afraid the disappointment would affect him
very

very seriously."—We must here remark, that Miss Gunning, on her return, declared that not a word had passed in the short absence of Miss Minifie from the table about the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Blandford, or any letter whatever.

"It is impossible," replied Mrs. Gunning, "that Mr. Gunning could have said this of the Duke of Marlborough's letter; the Duke of Argyle has shewn it to my daughter, and she has not mentioned to me any thing like what you inform me of now; on the contrary, his Grace's letter is perfectly polite and satisfactory."—"Oh, my dear Mrs. Gunning! indeed you are *deceived*; you are cheated by them *all*; the Duke of Argyle, Miss Gunning, and every one of them, are deceiving you: she *is* to marry Lord Lorn; it is contrived among them, and every body is helping on the match."—"Mrs. Bowen, whatever you may think of my daughter, however culpable *she* may appear to you, suppose her divested of all delicacy and honour, yet I cannot but hope that in the Duke of Argyle I have not been mistaken; you must have been misinformed, at least, in what concerns him; and I must still think myself and my daughter honoured in his friendship, and safe under his protection!"—"Upon my soul it is true, that he is the worst of all your enemies; and, except Miss Gunning's own wickedness, nothing can exceed the Duke of Argyle's."—At this part of the dialogue, Mrs. Gunning, feigned to be convinced of her daughter's misconduct, in order to see how far Mrs. Bowen's accusations would be carried, sat down to write a letter to her, couched in the strongest terms of resentment, and bidding her an eternal adieu;—*such* a letter, she tells us, as she should have written, had the charges preferred against her been founded in truth.——We cannot here omit a remark on the *inconsistency* of Mrs. Gunning, who reprobates the conduct of her husband in ordering his daughter to quit his house, when, as he *declares* at least, he believed her to be really guilty of the crimes imputed to her.—Though she tells us, that under a similar persuasion, she herself should certainly have bidden her *an eternal adieu*, which

which amounts to the same thing.—By noticing this inconsistency, we mean not to approve the conduct of the General, in this instance, as our subsequent remarks will amply demonstrate; we only mean to shew the ill effects of passion and prejudice, in the discussion of a cause which should only have been illustrated by argument, or explained by a simple narrative of plain facts, unclogged by extraneous comments.—To proceed—Mrs. Bowen bestowed the warmest encomiums on this severe epistle, and believing the resentment of Mrs. Gunning to be real, she made no scruple to comply with her request of seeing those letters which she said she had received from Miss Gunning; she even offered to send home for them, or to go and fetch them herself; but Mrs. Gunning declined giving her the trouble, and told her the next day would do as well.—The Ladies were then about to part, when a knocking at the door announced the return of Miss Gunning. Mrs. Gunning tells us that Mrs. Bowen exhibited the most unequivocal symptoms of fright and confusion, expressing a desire to hide herself in the adjoining apartment: she was, however, prevailed on to descend, and borrowing Miss Gunning's chair to take her home, she left the house.

Mrs. Gunning must here pardon us for remarking, that her indifference with regard to these forged instruments, as she conceived them to be, appears to us not only strange but unaccountable:—was it not more natural to grasp at the opportunity of getting into her possession the letters, which reflection or advice might afterwards deter Mrs. Bowen from ceding to her? she would then have not only gratified a curiosity that must have been *strong*, but have immediately secured the means of detection!—We see not the necessity of that consultation which ensued between the mother, the daughter, and the aunt, and which, in our opinion, terminated strangely:—The result of it was a note from Mrs. Gunning to Mrs. Bowen; in which the former assured the latter, that her daughter was an *Angel*; that the letters she had received were certainly sent with no good intent by some

secret enemy; that she could not but hope every thing else had proceeded from the same source to injure her child, and to impose on Mrs. and Mr. Bowen; that she was sure *they* must rejoice; that she was quite satisfied herself, and should *undeceive* them the next morning, when she should call upon them, and talk over the affair. — For what purpose this note could be sent we know not; the only effect it was *likely* to produce, was that of putting Mrs. Bowen on her guard, and inducing her to conceal the letters from Mrs. Gunning; that it had not that effect, is no justification of the measure; it was equally inconsistent and absurd. — The next day, Sunday the 6th of February, is a day of importance in the development of this mysterious transaction—on that day, according to the *QATHS* of Mr. and Mrs. Bowen, Miss Gunning went to *their* lodgings, where she wrote *two* letters, requesting they might be shewn to Mrs. Gunning, and which letters were delivered to Mrs. Gunning that same day by Mrs. Bowen. — Here again is a strange confusion. If Mrs. Gunning is to be believed, the conversation of the preceding evening, between her and Mrs. Bowen, related to those two same letters, which both Mr. and Mrs. Bowen have since *sworn* were written at their lodgings by Miss Gunning on the subsequent day, the 6th of February. The contents of one of the letters, too, is diametrically opposite to what Mrs. Bowen, as *we are told*, informed Mrs. Gunning it contained—that is—the letter of *the Conversation* requested Mrs. Bowen would *not* mention to Mrs. Gunning the report of her daughter's intended marriage with Lord Lorn; whereas the letter of *the Affidavit*, intimates a wish that she *would* mention the circumstance. — The parties, however, are here at *Issue*. —

On the one part, Mr. and Mrs. Bowen swear that Miss Gunning was at their lodgings on Sunday the 6th of February, and there wrote two letters, one to Mrs. Bowen, and a *second* (enclosed in the *first*) in the name of the Duke of Marlborough.

On the other, Miss Gunning swears that she never did write, then or at any other time, any letter or note whatever to Mrs. Bowen, or any letter or note in the name of the Duke of Marlborough, and that she never was in Mrs. Bowen's lodgings in her life.—In order to strengthen the affirmation of her daughter, Mrs. Gunning, very properly, attempts to account for every hour of the 6th of February, so as to prove that she was not at Mrs. Bowen's lodgings on that day.—General Gunning went out in the carriage in the morning, leaving a message that he should send it back by one o'clock, which, however, he failed to do. Miss Gunning breakfasted with her *Mother and Aunt*, and sat in the same room with them till half past twelve, when she said, "Perhaps Papa will not send home the coach as soon as he promised; I have a mind to walk to the Dutchess of Bedford's: when the carriage comes, you may call for me there; we will then go to Mrs. Bowen's, and get the letters; I will afterwards set you down, and go myself to Argyle-house."—Her chairmen not being in the way, as they were accustomed never to come for orders till four in the afternoon, and the weather being good, her mother made no objection to her proposal; and attended by *her own footman, John Dean*, she walked to Pall-Mall, where the Dutchess resides. There she stayed an hour and a half, and then returned in *her Grace's chair*. The first question she asked, on her return, was—if the coach was sent home: being answered in the negative, she told her mother she would then go, in the Dutchess's chair, to Argyle-house; for that she should not be easy till she had seen the Duke, and told him of what had passed the preceding evening between her and Mrs. Bowen. She was not absent from home more than three quarters of an hour, not having seen the Duke of Argyle, who sent her word by his porter, that he begged she would come again in the evening. On her return from Argyle-house, she remained with her mother and aunt till about three o'clock, when the Dutchess of Bedford called for her. She then desired her Mother and Aunt to go to Mrs.

Bowen's and procure the letters from her, and afterwards to meet her and the Dutches in Hyde-Park, whither they accordingly drove.—A few minutes after their departure, the General's coach returned, when Mrs. Gunning and Miss Minifie immediately repaired to Mrs. Bowen's; whose maid-servant said her mistress was not at home, but had left a packet for Mrs. Gunning. The Ladies then drove from the door, and opened the packet, on the envelope of which, *without a date*, was the following address to Mrs. Gunning from Mrs. Bowen.

“ For your satisfaction my Dr. Mrs. Gunning I enclose you what gave room to my *suspensions* concerning my cousin.—Being engaged to spend the day with Lady Stanton she has called to take me out.

Your's sincerely,

L. BOWEN.”

Enclosed were the two following notes :—

Note the First.

Superscribed *To Mrs. Bowen.*

“ Dear Mrs. Bowen,

Tuesday.

th “ As you seem to be in the confidence of mamma, I think it right to tell you that you may hint to her that my affections are engaged to my Cousin Lord Lorne and that I am not to be married to Lord Blandford; as she seems to think; will you be so good as to get the enclosed copied for me?

Affectionately yours,

E. GUNNING.”

The addition of an E to the name of Lord Lorn, is adduced by Mrs. Gunning as a strong corroborative proof that

that the note could not be written by her daughter, who was certainly too well acquainted with the name of her Cousin, and had written it too often, to have committed such an orthographical error.—This circumstance, we must own, has its weight with us, and, when joined to others, serves not a little to fix our opinion.

Note the Second, enclosed in Note the First, written on a half-sheet of paper, without date or direction, to be copied by Mrs. Bowen :

“ S I R,

“ I must say I wish you and your daughter had known your own minds sooner in respect to my son.

I am your most obedient,

MARLBOROUGH.”

The first of these notes, it must be observed, is dated *Tuesday*, when the day sworn to by Mr. and Mrs. Bowen as that on which the notes were written, is the 6th of February, which was *Sunday*.—If the *last* note was that which the groom delivered to his master, as coming from the Duke of Marlborough, how are we to account for General Gunning’s subsequent conduct, his expressions of satisfaction at the Duke’s *politeness*, &c.—In that case, too, we must believe Miss Gunning not only to have been guilty of a wanton—because useless—forgery, in the first instance, but to have afterwards played the hypocrite, in a manner equally unaccountable, by telling her mother that she had seen the letter at the Duke of Argyle’s, and was perfectly satisfied with the contents.—Nay farther, her affidavit (which we shall presently exhibit) where she declares the sentiments that letter inspired her with, were those of happiness and gratitude for the *honour* done her, must convict her of a perjury not less wanton and useless, than the forgery and hypocrisy which are ascribed to her.—Our incredulity on this point we frankly acknowledge; our *opinion*, however,

ever, we shall reserve for the conclusion, and proceed with our narrative.

These letters the Ladies perused on their way to the Park, where they soon came up with the Dutchess of Bedford.—The two carriages stopped—"Have you got the letters, mamma?"—said Miss Gunning.—"I have, my love," replied her mother, holding them up; "and you have gained a victory."—The carriages not being sufficiently near to enable Mrs. Gunning to give the letters to her daughter, she followed her out of the Park to the top of Arlington-street, where the Dutchess's carriage again stopped, and one of her Grace's servants was sent by Miss Gunning to her mother for the letters; they then parted.—Miss Gunning went to make visits with the Dutchess, and the other two Ladies returned to St. James's Place, where the Dutchess of Bedford brought Miss Gunning about five o'clock; and during the remainder of that day, she continued at home with her mother, who did not lose sight of her till they parted for the night at the door of their respective chambers.—In the course of the evening they both called at the Duke of Argyle's, but were not admitted to see his Grace.—Mrs. Gunning *emphatically* remarks, that General Gunning did not sleep at home that night; but—for a wonder!—breakfasted with his family the next morning.

In this manner has Mrs. Gunning accounted for her daughter's motions during this important day.—The truth of her assertions rest not entirely on her own testimony: If Miss Gunning had called at the lodgings of Mr. Bowen, when she left her father's house in the morning to go to the Dutchess of Bedford's, not only her servant John Dean might be brought forward to prove the fact, but the maid-servant of Mrs. Bowen, who appears always to have answered the door—and indeed, at whatever hour it may be alledged that she called, this girl must be competent to prove the truth of the allegation.—Her evidence, therefore, becomes absolutely indispensable; and, if it be not delivered, publicly too, before a magistrate, upon *oath*, the inference, that *must*

be drawn from her silence, will indisputably be favourable to Miss Gunning. There can be no possible reason for not bringing her forward on this occasion, since her master and mistress have themselves stood forward, by publicly swearing to the truth of their own assertions. Their oaths, being opposed by those of the young lady and her mother, (at least, by the oath of the former, and the solemn asseveration of the latter) absolutely require to be corroborated by that of their servant. Will it be urged that the servant was from home at the time?—Who, then, did open the door to Miss Gunning?—Somebody must; and that somebody, as being competent to speak to the fact, should be produced. Once more, we assert—and our assertion is sanctioned by reason and justice—that if this point be not publicly and satisfactorily elucidated, the triumph of Miss Gunning is complete.

On the seventh of February, Mrs. Gunning wrote the following note to Mrs. Bowen, which she left at her lodgings herself, while Mrs. Bowen and her husband were at dinner.

“ Mrs. and Miss Gunning present their compliments to Mrs. Bowen, and as they can *never* have an opportunity of *thanking her in person*, for putting into their possession the two black forged letters; one supposed to be written by the Duke of Marlborough to General Gunning; the other as falsely ascribed to Miss Gunning, addressed to Mrs. Bowen, they take this method to say how very sensible they are of the good offices intended them. Mrs. Gunning begs Mrs. Bowen to recollect what she told her on Saturday night, and the solemn asseverations by which Mrs. Bowen attested the truth of her intelligence; having done this, she would then recommend to Mrs. Bowen’s serious perusal the Psalms for *this* day, as *their* language cannot be misinterpreted.—Mrs. Gunning desires her opera airs may be returned.

St. James’s Place,
February 7, 1791.

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On the succeeding morning, Mrs. Gunning found the following anonymous note lying on her breakfast table :

MISS MINIFIE,

AT

GENERAL GUNNING'S, St. *James* Place.

"MADAM,

"The respect I feel for the character of General Gunning, as well as yourself, makes me very sincerely feel for both. Why two persons so nearly concerned, should be last undeceived, appears to me extraordinary.—Give yourselves but the trouble to enquire, and all mysteries will cease.—Apply *personally* to the Dutchess of Bedford, you certainly may rely on her.

"A SINCERE FRIEND."

"P. S. Don't be apprehensive of any duel—none is likely to take place."

The only important remark—indeed, the only remark worthy of notice—which this letter gives rise to is, that the word *James*, in the superscription, is precisely the same, in point of orthography, with that on the superscription of the forged letter from the Duke of Marlborough.—The omission of the 's—the sign of the genitive case—constitutes the similarity. The above note, General Gunning, we are told, afterward avowed to be the production of *Captain Bowen*, though written in a *feigned* hand ; from whence Mrs. Gunning draws an inference too obvious to need explanation, though too dangerous for us to dwell upon.—Suffice it to say, that a Court of Justice would receive a similar fact as a strong presumptive proof, in cases where such kind of proof is admissible. In the present instance, however, it becomes not us to decide how far it is applicable. The Reader will be equally competent with ourselves to judge of its validity.

After breakfast, Miss Gunning accompanied her *father* to the Duke of Argyle's, where she perceived no alteration in the conduct of his Grace ; but, on the contrary,
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experienced the same kind reception to which she had ever been accustomed ; nor had she any reason to suspect, from the behaviour of General Gunning, that the imputations charged upon her had made any impression on him. The subsequent day, however, exhibited a new and unexpected scene to her view. On the morning of the ninth, as Miss Minifie was going to General Gunning, to inform him of his daughter's indisposition (the violent cough which had induced the Dutchess of Bedford, the preceding evening to send her own physician to her) she was called by him into his dressing room. She had no sooner informed him of Miss Gunning's situation than he replied, that he was not surprized at the intelligence, as she had such a load of guilt on her mind ; observing that she had not only forged one letter from the Duke of Marlborough, but others supposed to have been written by the Marquis of Blandford ; he farther remarked, that she had prevented his groom from going to Blenheim, and had given him the letters which he was to say he had brought from the Duke of Marlborough. Miss Minifie asked him how it was possible for her to procure the seals of the Duke and his son ; he answered, she had seals of all kinds ; and that she had been at Captain Bowen's lodgings on Sunday morning the sixth, before they gave up the two letters to Mrs. Gunning. " Those letters, said Miss Minifie, were not written in Miss Gunning's hand." " She can write all sorts of hands," replied the General. The lady then mentioned the anonymous note of the preceding morn, which he said he knew of, and it was written by Captain Bowen : he added that if she would take Miss Gunning's keys, she would find in her box the copies of those very letters. He did not like, he said, to speak to Mrs. Gunning upon the subject as they were on bad terms. In compliance with the General's desire, Miss Minifie went to her niece and asked for the keys of her box ; the young lady shocked at her father's suspicions, immediately delivered them ; but her aunt found neither paper nor letters but what had come from the family of the Duke of Argyle. She returned to General Gunning, and informed him of this ;

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but he observed that his daughter must have burnt the letters in question. Miss Minifie told him his daughter was innocent of the charge preferred against her, and was resolved to vindicate her character from all such imputations. "Then," exclaimed he, "she will be ruined for ever, for in that case the Duke Marlborough will prosecute her, and lay her in prison for life; the only thing she has to do, is to go into the country or else leave England." "She will do neither, replied the lady; she is determined to make her innocence appear." "That is impossible; so watch her, for else as soon as she feels the weight of her guilt, she will destroy herself." Miss Minifie's patience was now exhausted, and she left the room.

About an hour after this conversation, the General left home; and at the expiration of another hour he stopped at the door in his carriage, and sent for Miss Minifie, who stepped into the coach to him—"Tell my daughter, said he, not to go to Argyle-House, for if she attempts it, she will not be let in; she must either go into the country or else leave England."—"She will do neither, but will stay and vindicate herself," answered Miss Minifie—"Then she must quit my house."—Miss Minifie now left the carriage, and the General, calling after her, desired she would tell Miss Gunning every thing; which she promised to do.

Miss Minifie repaired to her niece's apartment in a state of extreme agitation; which the young lady observing, she desired to know the cause of it. "My love, said her aunt, I have had a very extraordinary conversation with your father:—"she then repeated, with all the caution and delicacy the occasion required, every thing which had passed between her and the General. "Oh, papa, papa!" exclaimed her niece, bursting into tears, "is it *you* who *falsely* accuse me?"

It is here necessary to remark, that General Gunning, in his conversation with Miss Minifie, adverts to *other* forged letters besides that from the Duke of Marlborough. These letters, it seems, were addressed from the Marquis of Blandford to Miss Gunning, in the course of their courtship, and were couched in those terms of affection, which love alone

alone could inspire;—they were sent by the Duke of Argyll's servants who had been dispatched by his Grace to Lord Blandford, and who, if the accusation of the General be founded, must all have been bribed by Miss Gunning. The letters, we understand, are still in possession of the Duke, who, of course, by an examination of his servants, may easily investigate the matter, and learn whether they are forgeries or not.—It appears highly improbable—to say no more—that the young lady, even admitting she had the inclination, should have the means to corrupt so many agents—it is a charge which requires the most unequivocal proof before it can superinduce belief.—To return to our narrative.

The effect which this harsh sentence of banishment, pronounced by a parent, had on the delicate frame and susceptible mind of Miss Gunning, may be easily conceived. Such, indeed, was the anguish she experienced, that it was late in the evening before she was in a condition to obey the stern mandate for her expulsion from the house of her father. She then removed, with her mother and aunt, to the hospitable mansion of the Dutchess of Bedford. Previous to their departure, the groom, who brought the forged letter, desired to speak with Mrs. Gunning, but that lady's resentment was so uncommonly strong as to render her blind to her own interest, by commanding the man from her presence before she heard what he had to advance, and without seeking to procure that useful intelligence which it is possible he might, at this time, have been disposed to communicate.

Late on the night of Sunday the twelfth of February, the following letter, addressed to Miss Gunning, No. 49, Pall Mall, was received by that lady from Mrs. Bowen.

“ If you are not quite lost to every natural feeling for your unhappy parents, through your means disunited, you will instantly confess your folly to your dear mother, and no longer persist in what will inevitably plunge you into disgrace.—Though you have made a *dupe* of your mother and aunt you cannot the world—I shall upbraid
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you with the part you have acted in regard to myself and Mr. B——, I leave that to your own conscience—any thing on my part that will be the means of uniting you all, consist^{ing} with truth and honour, you may depend on; if you are not equal to the task of telling your folly to your mother, let me know in what manner I shall. As the *sincere friend* of all, I will do all in my power; for *God sake* let it be immediately before the world hears any more on the subject—I am convinced your heart is good and *have on'y* be led by folly—if you are disposed to make your family happy, come to me *instantly* and tell me what I shall do, you shall see none but myself, till every affair is settled to make you all happy—be not shy of coming to me I will receive you with the *sincerest love and affection*, and hope you will always consider me as your *sincere friend*—your father will be induced to take steps that must for ever hurt you in the opinion of the world (as *now* his own character is at stake) the dutchess of B—— *alone* will not be sufficient to protect you against the opinion of the world, besides at her time of life, in the course of nature she cannot live long, how much more respectable will you appear in the world protected by your father. —your present situation only will make you the ridicule of the town, consult your reason and your judgement and follow the dictates of your heart, which I am sure will lead you to act with sincerity and affection to your very unhappy parants. For *God sake* be as soon as possible accommodated, for all your mutual advantage; read this twice with attention and let me have a line to inform me you will act according to my *earnest* wishes for all your happiness, but remember *no time is to be lost*. Come to me, my dear cousin, instantly, and let us consult what is to be done for your happiness, and how chearfully will I undertake it.

Adieu, your's

Queen Street.

L. B.

I have sent Mr. B—— out of the way on purpose.

Sunday

Sunday even, half past Six

I have been denied to every one who call'd on me, and would not go out lest I should be asked any questions concerning you, whilst I saw a possibility of making up matters.

We are by no means disposed to criticise the *style* and *diction* of this curious epistle; a very few remarks on its *contents* will suffice for our purpose. Miss Gunning is here accused of having disunited her parents, and by the most artful machinations, and a long train of deceptions the most culpable, made dupes of her mother and aunt—yet this conduct, which certainly merits the harshest appellation that offended virtue could bestow, and if it be not actually *vice*, approaches so near to it, that the line of discrimination is most difficult to be drawn, is benevolently softened by her indulgent monitor into *folly*; this *fool* too, is advised to consult her *reason* and her *judgment*: and for what must she consult them? Why, forsooth, that she may follow the *dictates of her HEART!!!* It is the first time we have been told that the heart is the residence of reason and judgment!—She is represented as having made her parents *very unhappy*, through the discord which her machinations have tended to sow between them, and yet her kind instructress tells her she is convinced that she has a *good heart*. It must be acknowledged at least, that this mode of displaying her *goodness* is peculiar to herself! But this conviction of her goodness was indeed necessary to authorize those curious professions of *sincerest love* and *affection* which this very *sincere friend* makes to her, in spite of her *folly*! To be plain; such a strange compound of inconsistencies—such an olio of nonsense—never before disgraced the pen of a woman.

After Miss Gunning had, in compliance with her father's commands, removed from his house, and the motives and concomitant circumstances of this family rupture, had become the topic of conversation in the fashionable circles, it was deemed necessary that she should adopt some decisive line of conduct for the vindication
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of her fame. None appeared, in her situation, so proper, as that of making a solemn affidavit, before a magistrate, of her innocence with respect to the charges preferred against her. For this purpose, in the afternoon of Monday the fourteenth of February, she took the following oath.

Accusations alledged.

1. I am accused of having written letters in the name of the Duke of Marlborough and of Lord Blandford, and also of writing anonymous letters.

2. I am accused of going to Mrs. Bowen's lodgings, on Sunday, the sixth of February, about the forged letters produced by her.

3. I am accused of having bribed papa's groom, not to go to Blenheim with a letter from papa to the Duke of Marlborough, and a narrative of my writing which I had drawn out at the request of papa for the purpose (as he said) of being sent to the Duke and Dutchess of Marlborough; that I bribed the groom not *really* to go to Blenheim, but to *say* he had been there, and to deliver, as coming from the Duke of Marlborough, a letter that I had given him for that purpose.

Answers on Oath.

1. I never have written, nor caused to be written any letter, or note, in my whole life, in a disguised hand, by a fictitious name or anonymous.

2. I never was in Mrs. Bowen's lodgings in my life; I never met her by appointment or by chance, at any third place: the only place at which I have ever seen her, has been at my father's house, or in my father's carriage, and never without my mama or my aunt being present. I never wrote her a note or a letter in my life; I never spoke to her confidentially on any subject whatever.

3. I never spoke to papa's groom, or caused him to be spoken to, prior to, or on the subject of, his journey to Blenheim; I gave him no orders whatever, or any letter whatever, or any bribe whatever. I believed he had been at Blenheim, and that the letter he brought back was from the Duke of Marlborough; and I felt happy and grateful for the honour his Grace had done me.

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This oath, which we once more assert, to be as solemn, unequivocal and decisive, as an honest and judicious selection of expressions could make it, was administered by Justice Hyde, witnessed by two gentlemen of probity, and signed by Miss Gunning herself. Prefixed to it was this serious preamble. "As I may perhaps, from my time of life, be supposed to understand the nature of the solemn oath I am about to take, to attest my innocence of the above charges, I beg to assure the magistrate who shall administer the oath to me and the witnesses present, that I know, on the truth of what I assert depends my character in this world and my everlasting salvation in the world to come.

E. GUNNING."

If, after a declaration thus explicit and solemn, the lady shall be *proved*—for nothing less than *proof the most positive* can induce us to doubt her veracity—to have been guilty of a falsehood, her perjury must be wilful indeed, and must consequently incur the severest reprobation.

The day after Miss Gunning had taken the above oath, she received a note from her father, informing her that *he had seen* her attestations, and asking her if she would confess that she *was* at Mrs. Bowen's lodgings, on Sunday the sixth of February, and there wrote two letters.—This question was most grossly mis-timed, and—to say no worse of it—most grossly improper, as a compliance with the request it intimated, though it did not express, must have affixed the guilt of perjury on his child. Had he even been furnished with proofs of her guilt, it was not surely the office of a father to expose it; it was not becoming in him to exact an acknowledgment from his daughter, that she was a perjured wretch!—This application experienced the fate it deserved.

In order to prevent any disagreeable intrusion, of which she was apprehensive, Mrs. Gunning delivered to the servant a list of those persons whose visits she wished to receive, with express orders to exclude all others. A stranger, however, of decent appearance, presenting himself at the door, on Friday, the eighteenth of February, and enquiring very civilly for Mrs. Gunning, obtained admittance,

tance, and the servant carried a message to the lady, signifying that the gentleman would be glad to see her for five minutes. The answer was, that Mrs. Gunning saw no company. A second message was, in a few minutes, delivered to her—saying that he came from Lady Lumm, and had something to communicate from her ladyship,—This had no better effect, but the stranger was not discouraged, he sent her word that he was a physician, and his name Smith, and that Lady Lumm, understanding Mrs. Gunning was in a very bad state of health, had sent him to visit her. Mrs. Gunning, however, still persisting in her refusal to see him, he appeared much mortified, and at last acknowledged that he came on the unhappy division that had taken place in General Gunning's family, and that if she would but admit him to her presence for five minutes, he could impart something that he was certain must give her great satisfaction, or if she refused him he hoped she would have no objection to receive a note from him. But the lady was inexorable—*unreasonably* so, we think;—he therefore left the house with a declaration, that she should certainly repent her obstinacy, and with many expressions of pity for the unhappy situation of poor Miss Gunning.—The day after this, the ladies left Pall Mall, and removed to lodgings in St. James's Street, where they remained unmolested till the twenty third, on the evening of which day they were honoured with a call from a gentleman of respectability, who left with them the copies of six affidavits, intended to be made by Captain Bowen, his wife, the General's groom, and, (we believe) three of his other servants. These were accompanied by a proposal to Mrs. Gunning—that if she would suppress her projected "vindication," the General would, on his part, suppress them.—To this Mrs. Gunning replied, that she refused his proposals, and was not intimidated by his threats; that the innocence of his daughter *should* be exemplified, and being conscious that the power of publishing or suppressing, centered entirely in herself, she would most cheerfully persist in her fixed and unalterable resolution, though her death were to be the immediate and inevitable consequence thereof.

Together with the copies of the affidavits, was the following

lowing copy of a letter from Miss Gunning to Mrs. Bowen, to the authenticity of which the Captain and his wife swore the following day, February the twenty-fourth.

Eight o'clock Tuesday.

" You will, my dear Mrs. Bowing, be surprised at receiving a note from me so early, but when I tell you my motive you will I am sure intercede with Mr. Bowen to pardon the liberty I am going to take and grant my request. I will tell you in a very few words the situation I have for some time been in. Mama wedded to Lord B—— though every thing he did right while I was merely a cypher in the whole affair and indeed to tell you the truth that was the only light I wished to be considered in for tho I acknowledge him to be very amiable my heart refused him any share in it as it has been long devoted to another within this week I have gained papa so far on my side as to represent to him that I was displeased with the conduct of Lord B—— and as he has a natural affection for the person interested in my application he the more readily joined me and three days ago wrote at my request to the D— of — to tell him I was not satisfied with Lord B—— and in the most handsome manner wished to break off all further connection the D— of — wrote a letter which we received yesterday and of which I enclose you the copy and beg you will have the goodness to ask Mr. Bowing to write it of fair for me as I wrote it from memory and wish to send it to a friend of mine this evening by the post pray tell him my my story but save me as much as you can if I could present Lord L—— to you he would be an apology for every thing I have done neither papa nor I have courage to tell mama this for she detests the person dearest to me on earth I am sure I may depend on your not telling her any part of this letter I should have spoken to you last night but I found I had not courage do not send any note or message to this house about the contents of this letter I will send to you about two o'clock for the copy I hope Mr. Bowing will have the goodness to send me I would call but that I am to be all the

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morning

morning at Argyle house I write in such a hurry I do not believe you will be able to read this.

Ever yours affectionately

E. GUNNING,

The vulgarity of style, incorrectness of orthography, and defect of punctuation, which are visible throughout this letter, render it very unlike the production of a young woman of education, designed to occupy a distinguished place in the circle of fashion.

The want of a date in some measure augments the difficulty of detection, but it is evident from the contents that it was intended to be understood as having been written the day after the receipt of the *forged* letter in the name of the Duke of Marlborough—that is on the fourth of February—but the fourth of February was on a *Thursday*, instead of a *Tuesday*. How is this contradiction to be reconciled—and how will this pretended letter of Miss Gunning's correspond with that which she is said to have written on the *Sixth* at Mrs. Bowen's lodgings, or with that which she is said *then* to have inclosed for Mr. Bowen to copy? That of the *Sixth* we must observe is likewise dated *Tuesday*. If this was the letter to which Mrs. Bowen alluded in her conversation with Mrs. G. on the *Fifth*, how came she not to give it her with the others? There appears, however, to have been no mention of more than *one* pair of letters—but whether the conversation was the result of the letters, or the *reverse* was the fact, it is not for us to decide—we shall only observe, that if Mrs. Bowen did really receive the letter above and the other of the *Sixth* from Miss Gunning, both her conduct and conversation appear to us most strangely inconsistent. At all events, there must be gross and wilful perjury either in the young lady or in some of her accusers. The same question here occurs with regard to these letters as to the others—viz.—*when* were they delivered; *by whom*, and *to whom*?

On the evening of the *Twenty-fifth*, as Mrs. Gunning, her daughter and sister, were conversing together, a
single

single knock at the door was heard, and on the servant opening it, Mrs. Bowen rushed into the passage without uttering a syllable, and passed into the room where they were sitting; the ladies immediately rose from their seats in order to leave the apartment, and Mrs. Gunning, as she passed Mrs. Bowen, exclaimed, "Bold wicked woman! how dare you enter my house?" Mrs. Bowen cried out, "my dear Mrs. Gunning, I am come as a friend, stop, for God's sake; it is all a mistake." Her efforts to stop the ladies however proved ineffectual; as they ascended the stair case, they heard a scuffle between the servant and Captain Bowen, who said, he would go wherever his wife was: but Mrs. Bowen calling out that they were all "stark staring mad," and desiring him not to give himself the trouble to come up, he prudently desisted from the attempt; and they both retired, the Captain leaving the following message with the servants—"Tell them," said he, "they will repent of their folly; I came to save them from destruction, to-morrow will be a terrible day for them, and in three days Miss Gunning will be sent to *Newgate*." This message was highly improper to be entrusted to a servant, and from whatever motives it might proceed, the threat contained in it was founded in falsehood, and betrayed a want of feeling. The abruptness of their intrusion alarming Mrs. Gunning, she ordered her lawyer to write to them on the subject, in consequence of which the Captain waited on him, and desired him to inform his client that she should experience no farther trouble from him and Mrs. Bowen.

On the evening of the succeeding Monday, General Gunning sent the following note to his daughter.

Monday Evening.

"From an heart that still feels most sensibly the affections of a father for her who was dearly lov'd, proceeds this letter. That afflicted father desires an interview with his unfortunate daughter, in which she may depend on having no more to fear than the workings of an anxious and perhaps overindulgent parent. The time and place

of meeting is left entirely to her who is, even now, dear
to
J. GUNNING.

" Send an answer sealed with red wax by the bearer. I have opened the note and made it up in the form of a letter. I sup to night in Soho Square. I lodge at No. 13, Norton Street, Portland Place."

To this letter, Miss Gunning immediately returned the following answer.

Monday Evening.

" Turn'd from your doors, defenceless, pennyless, and robbed by you of what is and ever will be dearer than my life—my character—stigmatised for forgeries which those who really did forge the letters and *you, sir, must know* I am as innocent of, as Heaven is free from fraud; you who I never in my life offended in thought, word, or deed, to cast me out upon the wide world as a guilty creature, when you know my heart would not have harboured a thought, that could have dishonoured you, myself, or my sex; and after you had thrown me off, to pursue me as you would the bitterest of your enemies; to raise up false witnesses to crush that child whom you should have protected with your life; innocent, as I again repeat, you *know* me to be, even had I been guilty, which God be praised I am not, still *you* should have screened me, and your chastisements should have been softened by pity. You call me unfortunate—I am unfortunate; who has made me so? This unfortunate never will appear in your presence, till you announce, and that in the most public and most unequivocal manner, to the whole world, how much she has been wronged by scandalous contrivances and unheard of calumny.

E. GUNNING.

We could most willingly forbear to make any remarks on these letters, could we imagine that they would, in the smallest degree, tend to widen the breach between father and child.—That breach, however, unfortunately, *appears*
to

to be irreparable—It is our sincere wish that appearances may prove deceitful. Had not the General's note intimated a perseverance in his conviction of his daughter's guilt, we think he had certainly a right to *expect*, if not to *command*, a compliance with the request it contained.—An interview might possibly have led to a reconciliation, equally desirable to both parties; and we cannot perceive any evil consequences that could have resulted from it.—We are perfectly aware that there are bounds to be placed as well to parental authority as to filial obedience—but such limits are not to be fixed by those who are interested in their extent—they require a nicety of discrimination incompatible with prejudice or partiality—a coolness of decision, which reason may command, but which passion can never exert.—Swayed by these sentiments, we cannot withhold our censure on some parts of Miss Gunning's answer. Impressed with a deep sense of the injuries she had sustained, it is not, indeed, surprizing that her remonstrances should be serious and pointed; but her declaration at the conclusion of her letter, we conceive, not to be the necessary consequence of her situation; and nothing but *necessity* could possibly sanction it; to require, as the indispensable preliminary to an interview, that her father should acknowledge he had been *deceived*, would have been perfectly consistent with reason, but to exact a public retraction of what he had advanced, a confession that he had joined in (*knowingly*) preferring false accusations against his child, was to enforce a request which it was neither decent for her to advance nor proper for him to comply with.

Having thus completed our narrative of this strange transaction, and endeavoured to elucidate those points which are most involved in obscurity, by indicating to our readers certain data whereon to found the discrimination of truth from falsehood, we shall conclude by some few reflections on the subject which naturally occur.—Mrs. Gunning, in her "Vindication," which was evidently written under the strong influence of resentment, has, in many instances, suffered her feelings to obscure her reason. Hence, by an injudicious attenuation of circumstances, she has greatly contributed to weaken the effect, which,

which, in a more simple and compact state, they were well calculated to produce : when a variety of resources were open to her, and a proper selection was easy to make, she has frequently fixed on such modes of defence and attack, as are most inadequate to her purpose, eagerly grasping at a straw, when a more steady support is at hand. She has often disfigured the page of truth by the ebullitions of passion, —railed where she should have argued—appealed to the feelings instead of the judgment—and disgusted her readers by clogging a narrative of facts, that ought to have been exempt from every species of extraneous embellishment, with indecent invectives, superfluous insinuations, ill-timed raillery, and with fulsome effusions of maternal dotage, which, however excuseable in the nursery, are certainly misplaced in a pamphlet intended for public perusal. —But though candour compels us to notice these imperfections, the cruel situation in which Mrs. Gunning was placed, will certainly be considered as a palliation that ought to exempt her from the severity of critical censure. One circumstance, however, of a different complexion, can have no claim to a similar exemption, as, in our apprehension, it bears a strong appearance of duplicity. The lady (p. 89 of her Vindication) reproaches her opponents with having accused her of novel-writing—particularly of having written a novel, called *Waltham-Abbey*, a book, which she declares she never saw or heard of.—But would it not have been more fair and candid—instead of confining herself to a simple negative of one part of the charge—to acknowledge that she had written or assisted in writing, novels, [the confession would have done her no discredit] and to inform her adversaries that their MISTAKE (for such it evidently was) arose from confounding the title of one novel, which *was* written by the *Miss Minifies*, with that of another which *was not*—viz :—*Barford-Abbey*, with *Waltham-Abbey*?—as the passage now stands, a reader who knows nothing of Mrs. Gunning but what he collects from her pamphlet, would naturally suppose that she meant wholly to deny the charge of novel-writing—and indeed the petulance with which one part of the charge is repelled, and the expressions used on the occasion, evidently seem calculated to encourage such a supposition.

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The only part of the General's conduct, upon which we shall venture to animadvert—in addition to the objections we have already suggested—is the hasty expulsion of his daughter from her paternal home. We are fully aware that the honour of a soldier should not only be preserved unpolluted, but, like the chastity of the Roman dame, should be even exempt from suspicion. We are not, however, so destitute of reason as to stand forth the advocates of that tyrannical prejudice (too frequently mistaken for genuine honour) whose despotic voice is exerted to silence the dictates of nature, and exults in rebelling against the plainest principles of humanity—those dictates and those principles true honour always tends to *enforce*—never to *oppose*. We know not, indeed, any standard by which honour can be tried, so infallible as that which nature and humanity afford. If its suggestions prove repugnant to *their* laws, it cannot be *sterling*. Conscience is the source of honour; and from a source so pure, nothing polluted can spring.

Had the guilt of Miss Gunning been established beyond the possibility of a doubt, her father could not, even then, have been justified in so violent an exertion of severity—an exertion as erroneous in its motives as baneful in its effects. The Duke of Argyle, to whom he appears to have been most anxious to justify his character, is a father as well as a soldier; his Grace could never have supposed a dissolution of all paternal ties necessary for the vindication of any man's fame; nor could his judgment be so blinded as not to perceive that the measure was not more rash than *ineffectual*. In short, we conceive it to be the duty of a parent to *screen* rather than *expose* the errors of a guilty child; by indulgent exhortations to move her to repentance, rather than by unnatural rigour to drive her to despair. If any sentiment impel the adoption of a different line of conduct, it merits not the name of *honour*—it is a dangerous inmate, that should immediately be expelled from the mind.

If then, on the supposition of his daughter's *guilt*, the conduct of the General be so obnoxious to censure—what should we say of it, were we to admit even the *possibility* of her innocence?—more, *much* more than either
prudence

prudence would warrant or inclination suggest. In such a case, we trust, the feelings of the father would be sufficiently acute to constitute the severest punishment that even such cruelty could deserve.

To another principal agent in this strange business, we think it necessary to add a few words of admonition. We understand,—by public report—that Captain Bowen is about to institute a process for defamation against Mrs. Gunning. That he should take every *necessary* step for clearing his character from the foul imputations which have been cast upon it, is certainly right; but is the intended suit a measure of this description?—we cannot conceive it—there are other modes of vindicating his fame less fallacious and more effectual—at some of these we have hinted in the course of our strictures. The wife of his friend and his patron has surely strong claims—on her husband's account—to lenity and forbearance, and decency requires that every step he means to pursue against her, should be sanctioned by necessity the most urgent and manifest. But should he differ in opinion from us, and persist in the intention ascribed to him, we warn him that the *nature* of his action will be universally received as a full explanation of his sentiments. He has probably informed himself, ere this, that the modes of proceeding in the case of a libel are two-fold—*criminally*, by indictment or information; and *civilly*, by an action for damages. In the first case, the defendant—by a provision repugnant to common sense, and disgraceful to the kingdom—is debarred from adducing evidence to prove that the matter alledged to be *libellous* is founded in *fact*. Hence *this* mode of proceeding becomes favourable to the gratification of revenge, but hostile to the elucidation of truth. In the latter case, where the damages given are proportioned to the injury sustained, the defendant is allowed to prove the veracity of his assertions; this, therefore, is the only mode of prosecution to which Captain Bowen, can, with propriety, have recourse, since it will afford him an opportunity of asserting his own rectitude, and of covering his enemies with shame and confusion. It will not be objected, that the dama-
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ges would fall on his friend; because he will have it in his power to remit them. We need not say more—let him seriously reflect on our advice and intimations—he will find them worthy his intentions.

We shall conclude by answering a question which, of late, has been frequently advanced, but never replied to—viz. “What *interest* can a parent *possibly* have in impeding the felicity of his child?”—It is *possible*, that a parent—we must not be understood to allude to any existing, or even probable case—whose daughter’s attractive charms have procured her the offer of an union with the man of her choice—may, from motives of *avarice*, object to the connection, and, though opulent himself, may seek to impede her felicity that he may not open his purse—we trust that no such parents exist—but their existence is certainly within the limits of **POSSIBILITY**!

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